

REMARKS

In the March 7, 2006 Office Action, the Examiner noted that claims 1-4 and 9-13 were pending in the application and rejected under 35 USC § 103(a). In rejecting the claims, U.S. Patents 5,440,624 to Schoof, II; 5,237,499 to Garback; (References A and C, respectively in the March 15, 2004 Office Action); and 6,052,680 to Towell (Reference C in the August 25, 2005 Office Action) were cited. Claims 1-4 and 9-13 remain in the case. The rejections are traversed below.

Rejections under 35 USC § 103(a)

On pages 2-4 of the Office Action, claims 1, 2 and 9-13 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) over Schoof, II in view of Towell. As in the August 25, 2005 Office Action, column 8, line 5 and Figs. 2, 5 and 6 of Towell were cited, this time in rejecting claim 1. The entire cited line of Towell reads "In the following, an exemplary system for determining". Therefore, (as discussed in the Amendment filed November 25, 2005 by Certificate of Mail and received by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on November 28, 2005) based on the quotation marks on page 5 of the Office Action, it will be assumed that the Examiner intended to cite column 8, lines 5-27 of Towell. This paragraph describes a method for "determining whether to route an incoming e-mail to a rule-based system" (column 8, lines 5-6) for "a text to word list translation process" (column 8, line 10) illustrated in Fig. 2. The details illustrated in Fig. 6 all relate to operations on words in e-mails.

As described at column 5, line 59 to column 6, line 42 of Towell, Fig. 5 is an illustration of the following steps: "determining a relevance value of a preprocessed input message with respect to a decision system, applying a relevance parameter(s) to the determined relevance value, and invoking the decision system if the relevance value meets the relevance parameter(s)" (column 5, lines 60-64). In step 506, "a distance between the vectors is determined ..., [where] the greater the distance between the vectors, the less relevant the message is to the decision system" (column 6, lines 23-25). Step 510 in the flowchart illustrated in Fig. 5 compares the vector distance with a threshold and "if the distance is greater than the predetermined threshold value (assuming higher distance value corresponds to a higher relevance as is the case with a cosine distance value), the input message is provided to the decision system" (column 6, lines).

There is no suggestion in the portion of Towell quoted by the Examiner or the above-quoted more descriptive portions of Towell to base a decision on any the following factors: "a

number of speakers in the discussion, a number of utterance objects in the discussion, a depth of a tree structure of the information stored about the discussion and a data amount of the information stored about the discussion" (e.g., claim 1, lines 4-7). Since all of the independent claims contain this list of bases for judging whether to conduct a face-to-face discussion, it is submitted that claims 1, 2 and 9-13 patentably distinguish over Schoof, II in view of Towell.

In the Response to Arguments section of the March 7, 2006 Office Action, it was asserted that column 8, lines 11-18 of Towell teaches a "cosine distance [that] is the index" (Office Action, page 6, line 18) which is used when "the system determines whether to hold a face-to-face meeting" (Office Action, page 6, line 19, citing column 8, lines 11-18 of Towell). Column 6, lines 13-32 of Towell was cited as disclosing that "the system calculates the index ... by comparing the incoming message's words with a predetermine word list" (Office Action, page 6, lines 20-21).

The statement at the bottom of page 6 of the Office Action (quoted at the end of the preceding paragraph) implies that the term "utterances" as previously used in the independent claims was interpreted as equivalent to the term "words." To avoid such an interpretation, all of the independent claims have been amended to use the term "utterance objects" (e.g., claim 1, line 5). The term "object of utterance" (or simply "utterance" as previously used in the claims) is used in the application, e.g., in the last paragraph on page 2 and the paragraph spanning pages 2 and 3, to refer to an entire statement or several sentences. For example, "[a]n object of utterance is managed by an object ID" (application, page 2, line 25) and "utterance B, which is a reply to utterance A proposing a certain agenda" (application, page 3, lines 2-3). In the application, the term "utterance" is used interchangeably with "object of utterance" which has been simplified to "utterance object" in the claims. However, it appears that the term "utterances" in the claims was not interpreted in light of the specification, but given a broader interpretation consistent with the term "words," because there is a conventional meaning for the word "utterances" that is consistent with such an interpretation.

It is submitted that there is no conventional meaning of the term "utterance object" which is now used in the claims and it must be interpreted consistent with the specification to refer to an entire statement or several sentences. Nothing has been cited or found in Towell or in Schoof, II that would teach or suggest one of ordinary skill in the art to base a decision on whether "to hold a face-to-face conference" (e.g., claim 1, line 8) on the number of statements made, as opposed to making a decision about "the relevance value of an input message" (Towell, column 5, lines 66-67) as illustrated in Fig. 5 to "the word list ... which characterizes the process

for scheduling a meeting" (column 8, lines 55-56) or "the word list ... which characterizes the process for responding to a request for product information" (column 8, lines 59-61).

Contrary to the assertions in the March 7, 2006 Office Action, the "cosine index" is not a measure of the number of words *per se*, let alone the number of utterances or utterance objects, as recited in the claims, but rather the "cosine index" indicates how many of the words in a word list on a specific subject, i.e. scheduling a meeting or requesting product information, are in a message. Thus, the cosine index represents a guess at the content of a message, not the number of words in the message and certainly not the number of statements made or even messages received "in a discussion at an electronic conference" (e.g., claim 1, line 2) or in any other context. Thus adding the teachings of Towell to those of Schoof, II does not teach or suggest any of the following factors: "a number of speakers in the discussion, a number of utterance objects in the discussion, a depth of a tree structure of the information stored about the discussion and a data amount of the information stored about the discussion" (e.g., claim 1, lines 4-8).

For the above reasons, it is submitted that claim 1 and claims 9-13, all of which recite the same list of bases for "judging whether to hold a face-to-face conference" (e.g., claim 10, lines 7), as well as claim 2 which depends from claim 1, patentably distinguish over Schoof, II in view of Towell.

On pages 7 and 8, claims 3 and 4 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as unpatentable over Schoof, II in view of Towell and further in view of Garback. Nothing was cited or has been found in Garback suggesting modification of the method of routing "an incoming e-mail to a rule-based system" disclosed by Towell to a method of determining when to hold a face-to-face conference based on any of the factors recited on lines 4-8 of claim 1. Since claims 3 and 4 depend from claim 1, it is submitted that claims 3 and 4 patentably distinguish over Schoof, II, Towell and Garback for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1.

Summary

It is submitted that the references cited by the Examiner do not teach or suggest the features of the present claimed invention. Thus, it is submitted that claims 1-4 and 9-13 are in a condition suitable for allowance. Reconsideration of the claims and an early Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

Serial No. 09/892,749

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: 7/6/06

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